

Circular Letter No. 367.

September 22, 1906.

To Superintendents.

Gentlemen:--

Copies of the new course of study for the graded schools are being forwarded to you. The course printed is based upon the assumption that the first grade instruction is given in Spanish and the instruction in the second to the eighth grades is given in English. It is not to be understood that the Department prescribes this organization of the schools. The issue of this course of study involves neither the discontinuance of instruction in English in first grades where it now exists, nor the immediate transformation of Spanish grades into English grades.

Our schools are in a transition stage as to the use of one or the other of the languages, and in this situation the Department has selected as the basis of the course of study the type of organization which either is now or is likely to be within the next two years the most frequent type of organization.

The course of study, therefore, has not the force of a regulation of the Department. It is presented as a model to be used so far as applicable. Superintendents who have first grades in English or upper grades in Spanish

will adapt their work to this course of study as far as possible. The essential thing is to preserve a proper relation between the amount of work covered in the several years of the school course, and to make a gradual progress to the knowledge required to obtain the Common School Diploma. It is recognized that the distribution of the subject matter of instruction cannot be identical when Spanish is used as the medium of instruction and where English is the basis.

Not all the books which are recommended in the course can be immediately supplied, but a sufficient number will be available for distribution before the end of the year and copies for the use of teachers will be provided within a short time.

Every teacher should be familiar with the entire course of study. It is probable that the study of this course will be made a part of the regular teachers' English course for the year. In the meantime, each teacher should be held responsible for a complete knowledge of at least his own grade.

It is the present plan of the Department to send to Superintendents at the close of the first and second terms standard examination questions covering all of the subjects of the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades. By the use of these questions in local examinations

Superintendents and teachers may readily estimate the comparative standing of their classes. At the end of school year the usual eighth grade examination will be conducted by the Department and standard examination questions will be issued for the use of other grades. It should be noted that the examinations in Geography and in Physiology and Hygiene for the eighth grade diploma will hereafter be given at the close of the seventh year's work. For eighth grades now in operations these subjects will of necessity be continued and the same examination will be given to pupils of the eighth and seventh grades at the end of the year.

It should be noted that each grade represents the normal work of one school year. Failure to promote a large percentage of the pupils of any grade must be considered as an indication of some abnormal condition such as poor teaching, bad classification, or other similar fault.

An examination of the statistics of the past year shows that it was not uncommon for teachers to have charge of classes composed of pupils of two or three widely separated groups. It may sometimes be necessary to enroll such classes, but the desire to secure a large enrollment should not be allowed to affect seriously the interests of the pupils. Incongruous combinations, like that of a third

and a seventh grade, or a fourth and an eighth, are likely to be wholly unsatisfactory.

Circular Letter 194 of the old series, issued September 26, 1903, and Circular Letter 37 of the new series, giving directions in regard to the hours of school and the employment of special teachers, are still in force. In accordance with these letters all teachers, except those in the High Schools and graded schools in which the work is done in English, are required to devote six hours of each school day to the work of the schools, although classes of first and second grade are expected to attend but four hours daily.

In some districts it seems to have been considered necessary in the past year for the regular recess to be omitted from either the morning or the afternoon session of the schools. The Department does not approve this plan, and unless it is practically impossible to provide for a regular recess at both sessions, such provision should be made.

Respectfully,

Commissioner of Education.

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